UNITED
NATIONS

TD

United Nations Conference
on Trade and Development

Distr.
LIMITED

TD/B/L.915/Add.6
9 April 1991

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Thirty-seventh session
Second part
Geneva, 11 March 1991
Agenda item 10

DRAFT REPORT OF THE TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD ON THE SECOND PART OF ITS THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
from 11 to 22 March 1991

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Chapter VI

CLOSING STATEMENTS

1. The spokesman for the Group of 77 (Jordan) said that his Group had expected results from the current session that were commensurate with the critical needs of the international community, and particularly with the hopes and aspirations of the developing countries at the present time of change.

2. The Group of 77 was pleased that the Board had agreed a number of important decisions and resolutions at the current session, which had truly become a part of the process towards the common goal of security, justice and economic prosperty. His earlier qualification of the Board as a forum for the expression of hopes and the pursuit of the means for improvement and betterment of life remained justified.

3. Expressing satisfaction at achievements at the current session, in particular resolution 389 (XXXVII) on UNPAAERD, he said his Group was particularly gratified by the support that the other Groups had given the text. It was its sincere wish to see UNPAAERD extended, invigorated and fully implemented.

4. His Group was equally gratified at the adoption of resolution 390 (XXXVII) on the least developed countries, which addressed the needs of a large mass of humanity whose plight and suffering deserved the total support and commitment of the international community. It was also gratifying that no occasion was being spared to remind Governments of the need to implement fully the Programme of Action for the LDCs adopted in Paris. The adoption of these texts demonstrated that a spirit of understanding and political responsibility prevailed among delegations.

5. On the important item on protectionism and structural adjustment, it was deeply regrettable that the Board had not reached an acceptable outcome. The attempts by the Group of 77 to reach a consensus, and the maximum flexibility and willingness to co-operate which it had shown, had not been met in equal measure. This was most unfortunate at a time when the international community was in need of greater cohesion and mutual understanding.

6. The decision to hold UNCTAD VIII in a venue in the developing countries, Cartagena de Indias, was momentous in the history of UNCTAD and he extended warm thanks to the people and Government of Colombia for their generous offer.

7. His Group was confident that Governments had embarked on an irreversible process towards UNCTAD VIII, which would be the opportunity to advance understanding, action and co-operation in international economic relations.

8. The spokesman for Group B (Greece) stated that, notwithstanding some difficulties on issues of substance in one of the Committees, Group B looked at the future of the dialogue between developed and developing countries with confidence and considered that there was a need to continue to work together towards converging views.

9. Group B welcomed with deep appreciation the offer of Colombia to host UNCTAD VIII and was confident that the secretariat would finalise promptly all remaining necessary details and that the Conference would take place in accordance with the decision adopted unanimously as regards venue and dates. Preparations for UNCTAD VIII were now adjusted according to the new schedule and he reminded the secretariat of the need to prepare documentation well in advance of the first part of the 17th special session in order to have a meaningful discussion.

10. Given the spirit of partnership which had prevailed throughout the session, Group B regretted that its essential concerns regarding protectionism and structural adjustment could not be taken on board by the Group of 77. His Group maintained the strong conviction that the contribution of national policies and good management were of vital importance, both in terms of economic development and in light of the agenda of UNCTAD VIII. Appropriate domestic policies must go hand in hand with a strengthened multilateral trading system, which was what all were striving for in the Uruguay Round. Trade liberalisation by developing countries would foster increased trade linkages among these countries. Group B believed that better balance in the analysis by UNCTAD needed to be encouraged so that trade measures of both developed and developing countries were examined with reference to their impact on developing country trade, and so that trade potential among developing countries was made more visible, especially in the context and as a result of trade liberalisation. Recognition of these fundamental principles served the interests of the entire world trading community, in particular those of the developing countries.

11. The principle of partnership was a major focus of UNPAAERD and had been duly reflected in resolution 389 (XXXVII). This text underlined the responsibility of African countries as regards their own development and their commitment to continue reform efforts and promote development so that all groups participated in it. Environmental problems were also highlighted in the resolution, while continued commitment to the fulfilment of the objectives of UNPAAERD had also been decided.

12. Group B's view was that any assessment of the implementation of the Paris Programme of Action at the current stage would be premature. However, in the spirit of solidarity and partnership with the LDCs, Group B was positive and had accepted a text which had accommodated the interests of all parties concerned. It was Group B's understanding that the last operative paragraph of resolution 390 (XXXVII) would not in any way affect the agreed draft agenda on UNCTAD VIII. It was also understood that any relevant activity on this item during the Conference would take place within overall existing resources.

13. The spokesman for Group B noted that an effort had to be made to ensure that the schedule of UNCTAD meetings would comply in future with decision 352 (XXXIV).

14. He concluded that major challenges had to be faced by all countries over the years ahead in order to adjust and benefit from a rapidly evolving world. In this context, UNCTAD could play a major role as a forum for exchange of views between developed and developing countries on appropriate national and international policies, taking into account the new global realities, including the need to respect human rights and social justice. Group B believed that the Conference in Cartagena de Indias would be a major step in this direction, underlining joint responsibility and strengthened partnership. Group B approached the dialogue between developed and developing countries with a strong willingness to work constructively with all parties towards a convergence of views for the benefit of all.

15. The spokesman for Group D (Czech and Slovak Federal Republic) reiterated his Group's appreciation of the Government of Colombia's offer to host UNCTAD VIII and expressed thanks to the regional and group co-ordinators and China for their co-operative attitude during the session.

16. The representative of China observed that there had been a useful debate on all major issues at the current session and in most cases positive results had been achieved. The Chinese delegation regretted, however, that it had not proved possible to achieve the anticipated results on the question of protectionism and structural adjustment owing to divergences of view on certain important aspects of it. His delegation believed that the Board should pursue the issue of protectionism and structural adjustment in accordance with its work programme, as set forth in the relevant Board resolutions and the provisions concerned in the Final Act of UNCTAD VII, otherwise the sense of relevance of considering this issue would be lost. It was to be hoped that the divergences during the session would not adversely affect future discussion of the issue, in particular at UNCTAD VIII. He hoped that the technical and substantive preparation for the Conference would be accelerated to ensure that its convening was smooth.

17. As to the resolutions adopted on UNPAAERD and the LDCs, the Chinese delegation stressed that these should be translated into concrete action to ensure the imporvement of the trade environment of the African developing countries and the growth and development of the LDCs.

18. In his closing address the President observed that the session had been very important, given the scope of the issues dealt with and the decisive progress in preparations for UNCTAD VIII.

19. Delegations were now embarking on some eleven months of profound reflection regarding the future. The extremely varied issues for consideration ranged from UNCTAD's future role to the need for an effective dialogue on co-operation for development, which was to cover resources for development, technology, trade, commodities, structural adjustment, protectionism and external debt as well as the environment, sustainable development, national policies, the international situation and human rights.

20. On some issues delegations were closer together, on others efforts must be redoubled to find a common viewpoint based on joint responsibility for the future. He was even more convinced that, to reconstruct peace, the pressing problems in international economic relations must be resolved. UNCTAD VIII was a good opportunity to deepen the dialogue which other recent international gatherings had elaborated and he expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Colombia. As a cultural confluence Cartagena de Indias would be an auspicious setting in which to achieve positive results.